



THOUGHT LEADERS.....

## Are you failing the interview?

**Among selection methods, the interview is uniquely positioned to ensure the right candidate says ‘yes’. Yet research shows that too many managers make hiring decisions too quickly, and rely on gut instinct alone. This can be a costly error of judgement, according to Christien Winter of Sheffield. “In the current environment, a rigorous and structured interviewing process is critical – you simply can’t afford to get it wrong,” she says.**

Research by Development Dimensions International (DDI) on global interviewing practices and perceptions provides a warning for leaders that they may not be doing as good a job as they think they are when it comes to hiring decisions. DDI surveyed 1910 interviewers and 3523 job seekers around the world, and found:

- Interviewers often make hasty decisions – spending less than 30 minutes reviewing a candidate’s interview results with others before making a decision.
- Almost half of all interviewers are not formally trained in interviewing skills.
- Interviewers think they are doing a better job than they really are when it comes to needs such as describing the position, selling the organisation, and promptly following up after the interview.
- Poor interviewer practices - like being late, withholding information about the job or organisation, grilling, or asking irrelevant questions - are turning candidates off.

- Interviewers increasingly rely on information gathered from social networking sites to make hiring decisions. The risk is that what is posted on social networking sites may be done in fun, and may not reflect on-the-job demeanour or performance.

So what is best practice for the interview?

### **Stay tuned to the job**

Research has proven that interviews and interview questions need to be job related. When questions are not job-relevant and the interviewer begins to wander, the likelihood of coming away with the best information is reduced dramatically.

Job-related interviews are also less likely to result in claims of discrimination, but of course the interviewer should also be trained to avoid asking illegal questions.

One way to keep the focus on job requirements is to structure the interview. All candidates for the same position should be interviewed using the same set of rules, developed in advance, in order to gather the information needed to evaluate their potential for success.

The ideal question set will focus on what applicants did in specific situations. Behavioural-based interview questions allow applicants to choose their own examples, elaborate on what might be complex considerations and actions, and then explain in detail the different ways their actions led to results.

DDI has conducted a number of research studies demonstrating that its version of behaviour-based interviewing, Targeted Selection, produces a variety of positive organisational outcomes. For example, using Targeted Selection has resulted in better hiring decisions, faster speed to productivity, and better job performance. It has also had a significant long-term impact, including greater customer satisfaction, reduced employee turnover, and enhanced organisational performance.

Sheffield uses Targeted Selection with all candidates we interview for both clients and our own recruitment. In addition, we offer Targeted Selection training programmes for clients that complete the selection process from a shortlist, or conduct their own recruitment programmes.

### **Understand the interviewee's agenda**

Besides helping to identify the most qualified applicant, the interviewer is to a large extent responsible for getting the candidate to say yes to an offer of employment.

The interviewer is in a position to figure out what interviewees are looking for in the job and the organisation. This information is critical to determine if there is a good fit. It is also important for the interviewer to know what to emphasise in order to win over the candidate.

It is essential that the interviewer is friendly, warm and positive toward all candidates. First impressions are everything.

Equally, the interviewer should be aware of when a candidate is faking, or overselling themselves. Candidates for high-level or more complex jobs are more likely to have an ability to fake because they need to have increased cognitive ability to be considered for the job in the first place.

Interviewees' opportunities to fake can be reduced by using structured interviews that provide verifiable examples of past behaviours. It would also be important to have multiple interviewers, which assures that other interviewers can control what one interviewer may not be able to stop.

### **A final word**

Training is readily available for the structured interviewing mentioned here. With new skills, a better understanding and organisational support, interviewers can be much more successful in the future than they have been in the past.

The bottom-line? A high-quality interview helps secure acceptance from the best candidates and ensures that new hires have a strong start in the organisation.

For further information on selection processes, visit [www.sheffield.co.nz/Tsnewlook.htm](http://www.sheffield.co.nz/Tsnewlook.htm).